

THE CROSS OF SORROW

WILLIAM AKERMAN

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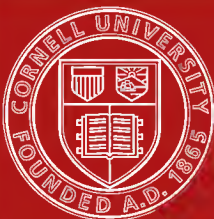
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The cross of sorrow. A tragedy in five ac



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THE CROSS OF SORROW.

Life is a song that hath its source in sorrow,
A ceaseless sob from those harp-strings whose harmonies
Tremble with tears. Nature so fashions us
That he who hath not suffered finds no purpose
In the vast sea of our humanity ;
Is like an empty hollow-sounding shell
Cast by the ocean on a desert strand,
And for all time abandoned.

THE
CROSS OF SORROW.

A TRAGEDY

IN
FIVE ACTS.

BY
WILLIAM AKERMAN.

LONDON:
GEORGE BELL & SONS, YORK ST., COVENT GARDEN,
AND NEW YORK.

1894.

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TO
E. M. C. W.
AND
E. E. E. W.,
THE MOST LOYAL AND UNSELFISH
AMONG WOMEN,
THIS POEM
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

IN presenting this my first work to the public I recognize that in a preface, above all places, brevity is the soul of wit. Although a brief preface may not cover a multitude of sins, it is, at all events, one sin the less.

My play is built upon the pathetic tale in "Gil Blas" by Le Sage, entitled "The Fatal Marriage," the beauties of which I trust I have not altogether obscured. I have endeavoured to write a blank verse play which shall preserve an equal balance between poetry and dramatic diction and situation, that shall have literary pretensions, and be at the same time—pardon the word—actable. If my story itself does not convey to the reader my farther and wider purpose it is useless for me to underline it here. I shall not appeal to those students of the drama who delight only in plays that are an echo from the dissecting-room, nor to those modern readers

who look upon thought as a vehicle for words, rather than words as a vehicle for thought.

I am advised also that there is little or no taste to-day for Elizabethan or any form of antique drama. That may be so, but the fashion of to-day is not necessarily the fashion of to-morrow; I shall not apologize therefore for the models upon which my work is based.

THE AUTHOR.

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CHARACTERS.

RAYMOND, King of Sicily.

DIEGO, his twin brother.

SIFFREDI, Lord Chancellor of Sicily.

MONCADA, High Constable.

GARCIA, a conspiring Noble.

PROSPERO, } Nobles at Palermo.
GRATIANO, }

ANGELO, } Peasants.
BATISTE, }
MIGUELO, }

A Messenger.

A Servant.

A Priest.

IRENE, Daughter of Siffredi.

NERISSA, her maid.

Nobles and Ladies. Soldiers, Citizens, and Servants.

PERIOD.—Between 1300 and 1400.

PLACE.—Acts I., IV., V., BELMONTE NEAR PALERMO.

Acts II. and III. PALERMO.

Between Acts I. and II. one day elapses.

Between Acts II. and III. twelve hours elapse.

Between Acts III. and IV. two days elapse.

Between Acts IV. and V. one day elapses.

N.B.—For purposes of stage representation it is intended this drama should be played in four acts and five tableaux, Acts II. and III. being condensed into one.

THE CROSS OF SORROW.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A vineyard in Belmonte. ANGELO, BATISTE, and MIGUELO discovered at work in the vineyard.*

Angelo. Plague take the work—mischief un-
make the work,
I'll work no more to-day!

Batiste. Nor I!

Miguelo. Nor I!

Why such another royal holiday
Sicily will not look upon again!

Batiste. Nor such another king! The streets
to-night

Will run with wine, my masters, in Palermo.

Miguelo. And six fat oxen will be roasted
whole

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Within the market-place.

Batiste. Preserve all kings

That keep such birthdays !

Angelo. This king^d is not fashioned
Of common clay !

Batiste. Roger of Sicily !
He hath not lain on roses.

Miguelo. Virgin Mother !
One marvels thirty years are left behind
Since Manrico, that devil's waif, his brother,
Planted the bloody standard of revolt
Upon the breast of Sicily.

Angelo. Dost mind you
How, month by month, the tide of battle
flowed

From sunrise to the crimson set thereof,
Till Siffredi, waiting his great occasion,
Fell like a whirlwind upon Manrico,
And, with one clean sweep of his battle-axe,
Smote his head from his shoulders ?

Miguelo. There was a stroke
He could not match to-day !

Batiste. I'll swear to it !

Angelo. Times have changed more than he !
How happens it

Manrico's sons have home and shelter here
'Neath Siffredi's own roof?

Miguelo. The old king willed it.
They say he hath laid charge on Siffredi
To educate the striplings royally.

Batiste. He never did have male chick of his
own,
King that he was, and there's the rub of it,
I'll wager now, he'll wed the elder of them
With his daughter Eleanor.

Angelo. Ay! Rumour paints her
The fairest lady living.

Miguelo. She may not match
With our sweet mistress!

Batiste. Mistress Irene? Nay,
And so thinks my lord Diego!

Miguelo. More's the pity.
Poor lamb!

Batiste. He hath a tongue might saw a plank.
I tell you, masters——

Enter DIEGO.

Diego. How now, ye saucy knaves, whose
poisonous tongues

Beget a pestilence within the air !
Who bid you mind the business of your betters ?

Angelo. Good, my lord——

Diego. Good, my lord, wouldst answer me ?
Out of my presence, fellow ! else, by my honour,
I'll have you roundly whipped. [*Exeunt* Peasants.

Oh, mockery,

Mark this bedridden king, that lives on shadows,
Yet finds heart in him to keep holiday :
Men will go down to their graves making a feast
Upon imaginations ! Can imagining
Set back this universe and make of me
My brother's elder ? Moments misapplied
Do grow more precious than eternity ;
And tho' 'twas but an hour interposed
Betwixt his birth and mine, that hour misspent
No time may e'er retrieve ! Where wert thou,
Fortune,
That helped me not while I, the laggard, lay
Halfway 'twixt death and life ?

Enter IRENE.

Irene. Why, cousin, what doth so perplex your
mind
That you assume so poor a countenance ?

Diego. Thoughts only, Mistress Irene.

Irene. Are they ill thoughts?

Diego. Yea, they are ill thoughts, being of myself,

That am all ill.

Irene. Therein your argument
Is strained too far, even as the bolt from a bow,
Which, being drawn with an excess of vigour,
O'erflies the mark!

Diego. And your moral?

Irene. Palpable.
That God hath fashioned nothing on this earth
Wherein is hidden not some germ of good.

Diego. Am I not past hope?

Irene. Hope never killed yet, cousin :
May it find thee braver spirits!

[IRENE turns to go.

Diego. Whither art thou going?

Irene. I have business with thy brother.

Diego. Business!

Irene. Pleasure,
If I so please!

Diego. Thou hast a nimble wit!

Irene. Would that thy heels were only half so
nimble!

Diego. Thou hast never commanded them.

Irene. The pity of it.

Would they run for me ?

Diego. To the remotest end
Of the world's wilderness !

Irene. Heaven forfend
Your brother is so far !

Diego. Gentle Irene,
[*He approaches her.*

Sure Nature, that hath decked thee out so fair,
Hath never schooled thee to be so unkind !

[*He seizes hold of her.*

Irene. Unhand me, cousin !

Diego. What, without a ransom ?
That were unreasonable. How beautiful
Those lightnings in thine eyes !

Irene. Unhand me, cousin ! [*She strikes him.*

Diego. Fie, vixen !

Irene. I abhor you !

Diego. A scorpion lies
Behind those rosy lips ; thus will I scotch him !

[*He attempts to kiss her.* RAYMOND enters,
and flings DIEGO aside.

Raymond. Thou, Diego !—May not this, the
fairest flower

In all God's garden-walk of womanhood
Compel thy reverence !

Diego. Why reverence ?
Is it your garden bed I trespass on ?

Raymond. Oh what unnatural tie of blood in
me
Hath stolen my natural part !

[*He advances threateningly to DIEGO.*

Irene. Raymond !

Raymond. My cheeks
Hang out shame's blood-red banners, yea, and
my tongue

Blisters to call him brother !

Diego. Gently done,
To fling the miserable accident
In my teeth, brother !

Irene. Come with me !

[*RAYMOND puts his arm round IRENE.*

Raymond. I follow thee.
Even as the tide the moon, so shalt thou draw
me

From this high flood of passion !

[*As RAYMOND and IRENE pass up the vine-
yard, DIEGO draws his dagger, follows
them, then pauses.*

Diego. Oh ripe revenge! oh rare, presumptuous
folly!

That would uproot the very base of reason :
These toys for children are, not for grown
men.

And for these deeds, I count them mid my
favours!

Oh, superhuman wisdom that with this bodkin
Would prick his skin, and let his life-blood out.
That were a kindness many a poor wretch,
Whose world is bound round in perpetual night-
mares,

With his last dying breath would bless me for
Who did so charitably help him hence
Into a dreamless slumber.

Enter a Messenger.

Messenger. My lord Diego?

Diego. My name, fellow! Whence come you?

Messenger. From Palermo.

Diego. Palermo! Well!

Messenger. I have letters for you, my lord,
Which I was bidden secretly deliver
To none but your own hands.

Diego.

Give them to me.

[*Messenger delivers the letters.*

Are these all?

Messenger. All, my lord.

Diego.

Get you within doors ;

I'll find means later to confer with you.

Stay! Breathe no word of whence you come, or
wherefore,

You follow me?—

Messenger. Excellent well, your Grace.

[*Exit Messenger.*

Diego. Garcia, beware! These idle characters
Are blabbers every one! knaves that will turn
Against the hand that hath begotten them,
And at the top of fortune him deliver
Unto his enemies.

[*DIEGO breaks open and reads the letter.*

“The end is rapidly approaching. The king
is sick unto death. He sees no soul but Siffredi,
with whom he makes his last will and testament.
'Tis an open secret he hath bequeathed Sicily
unto your brother, and his daughter Eleanor
into the bargain. They say he hath pledged
Siffredi deeply to compass this marriage! No

marriage, no inheritance—so runs the rumour.
Look to see me immediately. Let his majesty
but be laid out, and I'll to thee post haste.

Adieu, GARCIA."

Now doth my barque shake out her snowy
sails

Unto the winds of opportunity,
And this auspicious tide shall carry me
Into the furthest harbour of my wishes!

[Reading.

"They say he hath pledged Siffredi deeply to
compass this marriage! no marriage, no inheri-
tance—so runs the rumour."

If man may be inspired by devilry,
As by the highest good, inspired am I,
And do but want a diligent application
To rub my inspiration into flame!
Ring up the curtain, let our wits devise
A tragedy of terror and surprise;
Our plot is human, fashioned out with skill,
The puppets own a master mind and will,
And this the prologue, shadowed forth to-day,
Shall pale before the horrors of my play!

SCENE 2. *A Room at Belmonte.* RAYMOND
and IRENE *discovered at open window at
back. A sunset.*

Raymond. Now is the hour the twilight dips
her brushes
Into a deep carnation, painting the sky
With tenderest of blushes.

Irene. Now is the hour
The wraith of Death pursueth thee, sweet day,
And with the pall of night will cover thee.
Hence, hideous night, this day at least is mine,
Since from my lord 'twill not dissever me!

Raymond. Thou shalt not chide the night!
The silver moon
Is love's own light; then do the nightingales
Make music to the leaves, and the pale stars
Look down with lovers' eyes upon the earth.

Irene. If thou command, the moon shall be the
sun,
The stars of heaven the woodland primroses,
The nightingale the lark, and even then
I'll not gainsay thee that nor anything!

Raymond. Fond lips, forbear !

Irene. Forbear thou to commend them,
That have not courage to confess to thee,
Raymond, my father is on his way home
hither.

Raymond. Siffredi !

Irene. This letter proclaims his return to-
night.

God grant it mean not ill !

[RAYMOND *takes and glances at the letter.*

Raymond. Dwell not upon it.

If ill must come, twice shall we suffer it :
If ill come not,—why there's an end of it ;
Have done then with these terrors that shall
sleep

The sleep of happy children !

Irene. Gossips whisper

My father and his majesty the king
Harbour thy future hourly in their minds,
And with a pin prick out upon a chart
The course your young life's barque shall sail
upon.

Raymond. They navigate by the book ! Hast
thou not read
How the poor sailor, lost upon the waters,

Looks up to heaven, that only is his guide,
And steers his vessel by the northern star ?
Oh ! then how much more blessed than he am I,
That these twin stars of thine eyes look out
upon

From the windows of my heaven !

Irene. Stars are not seen
When clouds roll up, the heaven and earth
between !

Raymond. Faith's eyes can pierce thro' clouds !
—Have faith in me !—

What dost thou fear from Siffredi ?

Irene. O, Raymond,
I fear that first, that finer part in him
That he defineth honour !

Raymond. Doth our marriage
Dispute with honour ?

Irene. He may not hold it honour
To so advance his house in Sicily.

Raymond. Imagination fosters these pale
fears ;
Siffredi, ere the fall of night, himself
Shall put thee to confusion.

Irene. Love, not to-night !

Raymond. Why not to-night ?

Irene. The hour is chosen ill !
At the first blush of morn, if so you will,
The whole wide sum of our poor sin confess,
Whose hope were higher were our duty less,
Tell him how innocent of wrong we be,
Unless these dear loves make our villainy.

Raymond. Oh, I will urge our cause so
tenderly
That were he hedged thrice round with adamant
I would prevail !

Irene. Persuasion smile upon thee,
And all may yet go well !

Raymond. All shall go well.
Life is a slave, the strong man's time-server.
Our lives we will command, shaping their fortunes
Fully unto our ends, nor aught but death
Shall overcome our purpose !

[*A horn is heard in the distance.*]

Irene. Hark to the answer
From yonder hill ! That horn is Siffredi !

Raymond. Then we'll to meet him !

Irene. Oh, come what come may,
We shall be made or marred within a day,
Let a prayer linger in your deepest heart,—

Raymond. That Heaven will pity us, nor us
two part !

*[The sunset, which has been growing fainter
and fainter, dies away. Exeunt RAY-
MOND and IRENE.]*

Enter GARCIA hurriedly, and a Servant.

Garcia. Have you informed Lord Diego my
business

Bides his immediate presence ?

Servant.

I have, my lord.

*[Exit Servant. GARCIA approaches the
window.]*

Garcia. Why doth he tarry ? yonder cloud of
dust

Heralds the near approach of Siffredi,
And these few moments are as grains of gold,
Begging our lives from the pursuers' hand !

Enter DIEGO.

Diego. Garcia !

Garcia. Death's messenger !

Diego.

His majesty

Is dead ?

Garcia. As dead as herrings that have lain
A year in salt !

Diego. Didst look on him ?

Garcia. Not I,
For twenty thousand ducats. There's an old story
Dead kings will start at treason even as a body
That has been done to death will bleed anew
In presence of the murderer.

Diego. Thy fears
Are womanish ! Where is Siffredi ?

Garcia. Behold !

[*GARCIA leads DIEGO to the window.*
Yon whirlwind on the road !

Diego. He followed you ?

Garcia. From start to finish ! Such a desperate
rate race

Was never run 'twixt Belmonte and Palermo !

Diego. Get you to horse again, good Garcia,
Ply bloody spur, and post unto the rebels
Collected in our favour at Ajaccio ;
Bid them to loose no standard, raise no hand
In this our quarrel till we find occasion
To come to them in person.

Garcia. By St. Peter,
They will not take it well !

Diego. Content you, Garcia,
I have excellent reason.

Garcia. Take counsel of me, Lord Diego !

Diego. Counsel of you !

[*Knocking heard without.*

Listen !

Garcia. 'Tis Siffredi !

Diego. Well !

Garcia. He must never find me here ! My
presence

Were certain betrayal.

Diego. Get you upon your way, then,
My serving-man will see you are conducted
Secretly hence. For these full-blooded rebels
You know my mind, deliver it to-night,
And charge them fail me not, at your good peril.
Adieu !

Garcia. When will you join us ?

Diego. Soon as I may.
The pack must shuffled be before I play ;
To-night the plumage of the dove I borrow,
The hawk perchance shall spread his wings to-
morrow.

[*DIEGO conducts GARCIA to door, where
Serving-man meets him.*

I would have some study of this strange old man,
This marble-visaged riddle, Siffredi !
That which he hath in hand he will intend
To push unto an issue ere men's minds,
Which must be much unhinged by the king's
death,
Regain their natural balance. 'Twere a bold bid
To wed his daughter to Sir Masterful,
And set his offspring on the throne of Sicily.
And yet his disposition is so biassed,
That did a thought but whisper unto him
His own preferment, putting it against
The general weal——

Enter SIFFREDI.

Siffredi. Ah, Diego ! Is it thou ?

Diego. My lord ! Your return
Is sudden !

Siffredi. None too sudden ?

Diego. Nay, my lord !
I trust no evil tidings from Palermo
Have pricked you to so unprepared a visit ?

Siffredi. What evil fear you ?

Diego. It hath reached us, my lord,
His majesty was in a failing health,

And lay in mortal sickness at Palermo,—
Such was the rumour.

Siffredi. Rumour did not lie.
His majesty was ailing !

Diego. Hence the fears
That were begot of my solicitude ;
Dismiss them, good my lord !

Siffredi. Rest easy, Diego ;
My mind shall harbour your solicitude.
Where is your brother ?

Diego. Hast thou not seen him, sire ?
Perchance thou hast o'errun Irene also ?

Siffredi. Are they together ?

Diego. As much together, I warrant you,
As the hawk to the open sky, the heron to the
stream,

Honey to the bee, fruit blossom to the bough,
Frost to the ice, flame to the fire, young men
Dallying with maidens in the leafy lanes
When the cuckoo calls to the spring. Most dear,
my lord,

Since you were absent from us, between the
pair

An affection inexpressible hath grown ;
But, I believe, no more than may rightlly harbour

In the mind of brother and sister !

[SIFFREDI *comes down stage.*

Siffredi. What mischief is brewing?

You speak in riddles ; go seek your brother out,

Tell the rogue Siffredi is waiting him.

And bring Irene, too, along with you

Into my presence. [SIFFREDI *passes up stage.*

Diego. Your wishes shall be my particular care,
In a big net I will secure the pair. [*Exit* DIEGO.

Siffredi. This day that was appelled for a
wedding

Is left a widow weeping for her lord,

And all the shreds of earthly sovereignty

Are shook into a little heap of dust.

Death is among us, shrouded, invisible,

Save for the pallor of the upturned face

He hath laid his hand upon ! Into the chamber,

Thro' the closed door, with noiseless tread he
enters ;

The air grows suddenly chill, we shudder, we
shiver,

Peering each one at the other. Vanity of
vanities !

Each in his turn is called ; 'tis but a moment
That we poor mortal atoms float along

The prisms of the sun ; yet do we cease not
To wear ourselves away, pursuing shadows,
Phantoms that only people dreams ! Oh, majesty,
While breath inhabits thee we hail thee king,
Breath being banished, thou art king no more.
Thus speaks the littleness of human things,
Death is a king that makes a sport of kings ;
Time that doth crumble crowns exalts his
 sway,
His throne's foundations are the world's decay !

Enter RAYMOND.

Raymond ! [SIFFREDI *kneels*.

Raymond. What mortal stroke is here !

Siffredi. A stroke,

That lays my chastened spirit in the dust
With the body of my master.

Raymond. His majesty ?—

Siffredi. A nobler, braver nature did not live,
And Death hath made an end of him.

Raymond. No balm
Of words may heal these newly opened wounds,
Yet if it medicine unto your grief,
The monument unto his memory,

Let it weigh with you that his life had topped
The natural limit. How did he die, my lord ?

Siffredi. As lightly as a child may fall asleep,
Whose fragile frame fatigue hath fastened on ;
We bore him to the window, whence his eyes
Made a wide journey o'er the grey of heaven,
Seeking the hidden light. Silent he lay,
Carved all in stone, so passed an hour away.
Suddenly " Peace ! " he cried, a delicate breath
Hung on his quivering lips, and then the hush
That follows a departed spirit's flight
Fell on us all ; as if to answer him
A straggling sunbeam from the sullen sky
Glanced through the casement, and upon his
features
That grave and sweet serenity descended
Which man doth borrow in the little pause
When his body is with the world, yet no more
of it !

Raymond. Preserve his soul in peace, death has
destroyed
The very dearest pledge of gratitude,
For all our actions that were his true servants
Must seek a new employ.

Siffredi. O son, my son !

Doth not one faithful servant still remain,
Ere the begrudging earth close over him,
To place upon his bier a living wreath,
An immortal pledge of love and gratitude ?
Raymond, thy father was his mortal enemy,
Yet tho' the unholy fires of that hate
Death only did subdue, not once on you,
His children, hath reproach been visited !
There's a humanity that kinship claims
With God's own attribute, divinity.
Such stirred within his majesty, beholding
Your unprotected state, and, placing you
Within my hands, he bade me look on you
As you had been his son.

Raymond. What hide you from me ?

Siffredi. Tho' yet my lips are sealed, I hide
in me

The one last service he desires of thee.

Raymond. Firm hand, yet gentle, that hath led
me through

The nursery of life, my soul and honour

I swear to its fulfilment !

Siffredi. Stay thine oath,

Whose future hidden lies from thee, such pledges
Must hourly be forsworn !

Raymond. Dost thou doubt me ?

Siffredi. Will is but mortal, what may will
avail thee

Against the coming storms of circumstance
Not yet foreshadowed ?

Raymond. We will provide against them
While yet we may. Take thou this parchment,
Siffredi,

[RAYMOND crosses to a table where a blank
parchment is spread open.

Whose virgin surface I do dedicate
Unto my benefactor ; choose thou the season
Here to inscribe my service, and that all men
May know, whatever be its consequence,
I shall abide by it ; here stand my witnesses,
My hand and seal upon it !

[RAYMOND signs the parchment, leaving the
rest of the page blank, and hands it to
SIFFREDI who hesitates to take it.

Siffredi. Stay !

Raymond. Nay, hear me !

The terms of it are thine herein to fill,
The occasion governed only by thy will.
And Heaven itself abandon mine and me
Ere I forswear my oath, or fail to thee !

Siffredi. More dear than any son, let my heart
speak
Here in the river of mine eyes.

Raymond. Weep not.
I am twice blessed my gratitude to prove
And with the same stroke recompense thy love ;
For what remains, the heavy task is thine,
My conscience is at rest.

Siffredi. Ah, would were mine !

IRENE enters and embraces SIFFREDI.

Irene. Father !

Siffredi. My bright star ! night forgets to
reign
Till you peep out upon the brow of Heaven.

Irene. Sire, your hand trembles. Nay, deny
me not,
Your eyes are big with tears.

Siffredi. Hath not joy tears,
Even as sorrow hath ?

Irene. If this be joy,
What holiday attire doth weeping wear,
And are the elements of earth and air
Become confounded that I know them not ?
You are not kind, my lord, nor honest !

Siffredi. Raymond,
Speak thou for me.

Raymond. Irene, his majesty——

Irene. His majesty—is dead !

Raymond. 'Tis even so.

Irene. Now can I hear the solemn funeral bell
Tolling the death-knell of our hapless loves.

Raymond ! [*She approaches* RAYMOND.

Siffredi. Who calleth Raymond ?

Irene. I, my lord.

Siffredi. That shalt thou then no longer
From this night
To each and all of us, whate'er hath been,
Raymond is dead and buried.

DIEGO enters and comes down stage.

Gentlemen !

Raymond to-night is King of Sicily,
And Sicily hath instant need of him !

[*IRENE throws herself into RAYMOND'S arms.*

SIFFREDI stands aghast.

ACT II.

The Palace at Palermo.

SCENE I. *A Room in the Palace.* SIFFREDI
seated at a table covered with papers. A
light burning.

Siffredi. Sicily, I have loved thee as my son,
My breast is scarred with wounds for thee, my
blood
For thee hath flowed like water ! Wilt thou,
Sicily,
Require of me this mortal sacrifice,
This image of my body and soul, my daughter ?
Inevitable sorrow is the legacy
Of all mankind, yet of all griefs that range
Within the little compass of our lives,
That crown of griefs must come when those dear
bodies,
Loved as our own, are snatched from our em-
brace

Into Death's desolation. Memory leads me
Along the silent gallery of time,
And pausing at the picture of her mother,
Who like some fragile flower opening
Too early in the spring, her head bowed down
Beneath a most untimely breath of winter,
Abandons me to weeping! In this my child
She lives again. I watch her sweetness grow
Like a young rose unfolding day by day,
Its petals to the sun! O Sicily,
I have given thee my all, all that remains
Of dignity and honour take from me,
But spare me this one blossom!

Enter IRENE.

Irene. May I not enter in?

Siffredi. Come hither, child.

Irene. This yielding door I find a world more
kind

Than that which shuts off access to your heart!

[*IRENE sits at his feet.*

Siffredi. Am I so hard?

Irene. I have a doubt of thee,
For see—here on my hand a tear has fallen,

Oh, it doth glisten like the first pale star
That trembles through the sombre evening
sky.

Siffredi. Wilt not be merry?

Irene. Rather will I be bold,
Like a great warrior, stern for a siege,
Battering the walls till the submissive foe
Entreat me through the breach to enter in.
May I speak with thee awhile?

Siffredi. Of what?

Irene. Of whom!

Siffredi. Of Raymond, is it so?

Irene. He and no other;
Raymond is a theme no tongue may weary of.

Siffredi. I have forbidden thee that name!

Irene. What reasons
Reasoning most preposterous forbid me,
While I may call this sweet green earth the
earth,

To not call Raymond Raymond?

Siffredi. Reasons of state.—
I have answered thee!

Irene. Alack, I know this state
That is of hearts the great iconoclast;
This state that tramples with remorseless foot

Upon the very head of sweet compassion !

Siffredi. You love him ?

Irene. Pity of Heaven ! How I love him !

Siffredi. Mine was the fault, and doubly mine
the fault,

That did not this foresee.

Irene.

Be merciful :

I cannot picture so most blank a world

As this world were had these things never been !

Siffredi. I am most merciful ! the black here-
after

Against this present sky of dazzling light

More desolate shall seem.

Irene.

How gross an error,

For love like ours there cometh no hereafter,

The present is eternal !

Siffredi.

So youth sings.

The hollow rings about the eyes of age

Are planted there by the ebb and flow of tears

Young love doth dream not of ; come, little
one,

The hour is waxing late, and for these roses

The dew of sleep must bathe them o'er again

Before the morning break.

Irene.

Give me thy blessing !

Siffredi. May tenderest fortune fashion thee,
my child,
Into the image of a perfect woman,
Pure with the purity that suffering brings,
Peaceful with that peace born of sacrifice.

Irene. Wilt thou bless Raymond ?

Siffredi. Even as I bless thee.
Go ; God be with thee !

[*SIFFREDI rises and leads IRENE to the door.*

Onward to the end,
Not daring to look back, I take my way
Toward the eternal star which Hope hath hung
Behind the black, impenetrable night.

[*He picks up from the table the parchment*
RAYMOND has given him.

Accursed paper, smiling up on me
Like some white soul, that hath not comprehension
What sin may mean. I read thy quest of
me

To trace above this kingly signature
My dear child's name—Irene ! Were he plighted
To her in holy wedlock !—that were a treason
Lover and king in him would fly to pardon.
And she, with desperate arms about me bound,

Would bless me for her dear inheritance.
Hence, fleshly failing !

[He throws the parchment down.]

Shall I falter now,
When my steps almost top the mountain's
brow ?

I'll gather new strength from these sufferings,
And they shall school me unto higher things.
Thus shall my mind preserve her equal state
Till my life's purpose I may consummate.

Enter a Servant.

Servant. His Excellency the Count
Ludovico Moncada, good my lord,
Desires an audience.

Siffredi. Bid the Count within.
Remember, I am always at his service.

[Exit Servant:]

Welcome, Moncada !

Moncada. Welcome !

Siffredi. How fares our city ;
Was order uppermost within her walls
As you came hither ?

Moncada. The city was asleep.

No soul was stirring.

Siffredi. I am glad at it.

This approaching coronation troubleth me :
And for the troops you handle on the morrow,
Make sure you set your forces thro' the streets
In such a manner we may be prepared
Should evil spirits meditate surprise.

Moncada. All is foreseen.

Siffredi. Foreseeing is preventing.
It is your men that stand and gape at corners
That prompt a crowd to mischief. Is there
aught

In which I may serve thee ?

Moncada. I am come to you
On a suit that is personal.

Siffredi. It is recommended
Doubly thereby.

Moncada. No doubt of thy goodwill
Stealeth the courage in me to approach thee !
And yet,—my matter is so foreign to me
I am poor in words.

Siffredi. The barest words are eloquent
'Twixt friend and friend.

Moncada. So be it ! *Siffredi,*
I have set my mind on marrying.

Siffredi. Marrying, Count ?

Moncada. Ay, marrying.

Siffredi. What pleasantry is this
That lures thy winter suddenly away
Into a lusty spring ?

Moncada. Nay, Heaven help me,
By every sign and token I declare
I am most deep in love.

Siffredi. Some old world goddess
Hath wrought on thee this miracle ?

Moncada. No goddess,
But something sweetly human ! Siffredi,
Thou that hast sunned thee hourly in her
presence,
Behold in me a thief come unto thee—
I love thy daughter !

Siffredi. Irene ?

Moncada. So I noted
They named her that presented me to her
Last winter in Palermo.

Siffredi. Last winter, say you ?
She was but a child, some sixteen summers
only,
And now !—Thou hast seen her again,
Count, answer me ?

Moncada. Never again till this morning as she
rode,

Like an empress, thro' the city at your side ;
The flower of her exquisite young beauty,
Which the first moment my eyes fell on her
Took possession of my soul, time hath but
lent

A deeper lustre to. You know my service
How high it stands and in what wise the state
Hath recompensed it ; let it weigh with you,
And if you find me worthy so much honour
Give me her hand in marriage.

Siffredi. The honour, my lord,
Is mine, not thine ! But that the matter be delicate

I pray you, ere I straightway answer you,
Deny me not an opportunity
To sound her disposition.

Moncada. Think you, Siffredi,
My suit shall displease her ?

Siffredi. Nay, be certain, Count,
She'll hold your offer in a high esteem.
For myself, I look upon it with every favour,
And tho' this near approaching coronation
Claimeth my constant and most searching care,

Let it be ended and I'll urge your cause
With all the voice I know.

Moncada. You will command of me
Unspeakable gratitude ! Upon the morrow
I'll beg your kindness to present me to her
Anew.

Siffredi. I will do it, my lord.

Moncada. I am deeply beholden.
Adieu until to-morrow !

Siffredi. Till to-morrow, adieu !

[*Exit* MONCADA.]

What threads do hold the fortunes of our lives,
Poor waifs of ever shifting destiny ;
Is this rough soldier Heaven or Hell sent
To unravel the tangle that these skeins are in ?
His merit is surpassing, would that his tongue
Did justice to his merit !

[*SIFFREDI pauses in deep thought, then picks
up the parchment.*]

Silent bond,
That did so near persuade my soul to treason,
Come hence with me, and lie beneath my pillow,
To-morrow I shall find a use for thee.

SCENE 2. *A Terrace on the Palace. Moon-light.* RAYMOND and IRENE.

Raymond. Oh, for some searching and prophetic eye

To look into our ill-starred horoscope !

Irene. Unto what end, my lord ?

Raymond. That, all foreseeing,
We might build up sky high our battlements
Against advancing fate.

Irene. Fate falls from Heaven !

Raymond. Then let us to the centre of the
earth,

That ere fate fall on us the earth itself
Be laid in ruins ! Is there never a tear
May trace upon thy father's heart of stone
One touch of pity ?

Irene. Sooner may the dewdrops
Flung from the eyelids of the mountain spring,
Mark on the rocky bed receiving them
Their weeping images.

Raymond. Then let us fly

This mad world's malice to dissever us !

Irene. Whither, my lord ? Where may we hide
away,

Whom Fate hath planted in the glare of day ?

No violet's bed is ours, the wild wood deep

Shields with a silence of unbroken sleep,

Where, happy flower, obscure it lives and dies,

Wept over by the dews from pitying skies !

Raymond. Yet hapless youth hath only once
to sing,

For mortal loves there only blooms one spring.

The hum of the busy insect world, the breeze

Caressing the delicate green of the bursting trees,

The dip of the swallow to the meadow, the larks
that rise

From the grasses strewn with a million golden
eyes,

Blossom and bird and leaf of the greenwood tree

Wake with the new year we shall never see.

Irene. Knowest thou what a nameless fear may
be ?

Such is the fear that overmasters me,

And with the night come troops of hideous
dreams

Shaking my soul to its centre.

Raymond. Never was dream
Could shake my spirit yet!

Irene. And yet, last night
I found myself within a sepulchre,
Living, and this the earth had closed on me ;
I heard your voice, afar in the outer world,
Calling to me, I sought to come to you,
I sought to make you hear me : with wild
hands

I beat upon the door ; I felt around
The clammy walls, hoping I might discover
One little chink, which letting daylight in
Might let me out to day. Suddenly I stum-
bled—

Stumbled o'er something that stirred—oh, God !
'twas a man !

A dead man, huddled up in a corner there—
Foully done to death. Then I laughed—such a
laugh—

It tore the very soul out of the night.
I was mad—Raymond—mad ! The walls closed
in on me :

I found myself falling through a bottomless pit—
But faster than I fell a voice pursued me
Crying, “ Avenged ! ”

Raymond. For this ill dream of thine.
Take thus, pale lips, thy punishment from mine !

[SIFFREDI'S voice is heard calling without.

Siffredi. Irene !

Irene. Raymond ! 'Tis my father's voice,
Oh, leave me !

Raymond. Leave thee ? Nay ! I will not leave
thee !

Irene. I have no fears for these poor parts
of me

But for thine own self, Raymond, take thee hence.

Raymond. Hence without thee ? ah, then that
hence must be

A never-ending waste, a wilderness
Where never flower may blossom !

Irene. Prudent be,
Since all the world dissembles, may not we
That cast our lives down for as dear a stake
As the walls of the world contain ?

Raymond. Thou art all wise,
And I a madman am !

Irene. Thou art more wise
Than man may be, except in loving me,
In that thou art more dear, and still more dear,
Than man upon this earth.

Siffredi.

Irene!

Irene.

Go!

Good-night, and go!

Raymond.

Good-night as oftentimes

As there are stars upon the floor of Heaven!

[SIFFREDI *appears on the terrace and, drawing* IRENE *to him, shields her with one arm, while with the other he silently waves* RAYMOND *away.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A vestibule in the Palace.* DIEGO
and MONCADA.

Diego. You are preoccupied, my lord ?

Moncada. Yea, somewhat.

Diego. If my poor company give you offence
Stand not on ceremony, bid me hence.

Moncada. Canst thou instruct me ? I have
heard men say
Thou art long-headed.

Diego. If the world so judge me
Withhold thy faith !

Moncada. Why ?

Diego. Hath the world got wits
Within a moment ?

Moncada. Are there no wits in the world ?

Diego. There be saints are fools, and wise
men mostly knaves :
The devil will have it so.

Moncada. They are both to be pitied.

Diego. I have no sympathy with fools, my lord.

I exult to see the wise men pull the strings
And make them dance.

Moncada. You make an excellent sport
Of bitterness.

Diego. I make the bitter sweet
By contemplating it.

Moncada. Hast never thought
To find thee a profession ?

Diego. What wouldst thou have me ?
A soldier, a polluted human butcher,
That hacks and hews at man in such a fashion
The doctor's merest 'prentice would cry out on
him

For a most filthy bungler ! A sly statesman,
Who having not a martial heart to die
Upon his country's cause, must lie for her !
A cardinal, cheating his earthy soul,
That suffocates with surfeit of good things,
Into a hope of Heaven ! A dry lawyer
Who, being born a rogue, happily discovers
A profession proper to make of him a greater !
The merchant, sweating the soul of his fellow-
man

To make him ducats ; the miser, hoarding them
That some young thriftless fool when he is
buried

May fling them broadcast to the winds of
Heaven !

The sleek, smug tradesman, with a little mind,
Aggressively Christian, ignorant of charity,
To top the basket ! Hence with thy professions :
I have pricked their bubbles, one by one, my lord,
I will none of them !

Moncada. Thou art past hope of prayer.
Hast ever been in love ?

Diego. What call you love ?

Moncada. I seek to know.

Diego. How wilt thou, if thou'rt in it ?
It is the thief of reason, so men say ;
And yet, tho' thieves are sworn foes to society,
No man is happy till he hath loosed the thief
Upon himself. Love hath been named a fruit,
An apple, with a very goodly cheek,
Within whose core the creeping maggot lies ;
A something very sweet before the tasting,
A something very rare before the having ;
Once tasted bitterness, once had despised,
A most foul poison, artfully disguised !

Moncada. Be there no women pure ?

Diego. There be some pure,
As by a charitable accident ;
Yet be she tempted, and the hour fits in,
The woman does not live who will not sin !

Moncada. If this be knowledge let me stay
unwise !

Diego. Thus only, good my lord, is paradise.
Would you know more ?

Moncada. Methinks I know a maiden,
Who, if her looks give not her life the lie,
The lily flower may not match in purity.

Diego. She is not yet in the mould. Where
dwelleth she ?

Moncada. Come hence with me, thou prince
of misbelievers,
Unto the council chamber, there his majesty
Holdeth his new-made court ; if fortune aid
thee

Thou'lt find her in his presence.

Diego. I follow thee.

[At the conclusion of this scene folding curtains at the back of the set are drawn apart, disclosing a coronation hall, with doors at back, folding, and raised throne,

with steps leading up to it. Courtiers are passing to and fro, MONCADA and DIEGO take their way through them. GRATIANO and PROSPERO come down stage. At intervals during all this scene a storm is heard without.

Gratiano. Heaven hath unloosed its thunders!

Heard you ever

So wild a storm?

Prospero. 'Tis as some mighty ocean
Had overleapt its barriers! These rains
Will wash our walls away.

Gratiano. There is no cloud
In all the firmament the crooked lightning
Hath not cracked right in twain.

Prospero. Saw you the moon
Last night? Her face was smirched with
blood.

Gratiano. Doth that
Presage a storm?

Prospero. Some dire calamity.

Gratiano. 'Tis not a happy omen! Hold you,
Prospero,
With these forebodings?

Prospero. In some part I do.

Yet have I seen ere now a day as dismal
Die on a bed of splendour.

[GRATIANO and PROSPERO retire up stage.

SIFFREDI and IRENE enter. *A lane is made for them through the courtiers, and as they advance a whisper of voices arises, each repeating "Siffredi."* SIFFREDI and IRENE pause at the base of the throne, SIFFREDI resting his foot upon it.

Siffredi. Welcome, my lords and ladies all, we know

There be some hearts among you here to-day
That love us. All that love us well love Sicily,
And Sicily we make our argument.
Unto our enemies, wheresoe'er they be,
We face them as a loyal, united people ;
And vengeance, swift and terrible, shall fall
On those foes that menace our monarchy.
Remember, O Sicilians, this young king
Doth, like a nestling that is barely fledged,
Spread out his wings, and for the first time
venture

Upon a flight in the full sight of Heaven !
You'll find him brave, you'll find him generous,

With spirit bold enough to fight just battles :
Aid him that he may wield these attributes
To do himself and you perpetual honour.

[SIFFREDI, *with* IRENE, *passes up the stage.*

The silence following his address is suddenly broken by shouts of " Long live the king ! " GARCIA passes through the Courtiers, and confronts SIFFREDI.

Garcia. Siffredi !

Siffredi. My lord ! You heap surprises on us.

We had not hoped to see you, hearing tell
How much you are occupied of late collecting
Levies at Ajaccio.

Garcia. Most good, my lord,
You would not have our blades rust, nor our people,
Playing upon these pipes of peace, unlearn
The craft of war ?

Siffredi. So far from it, my lord,
There's not a peasant breathes in Sicily,
Shall not upon a right and proper quarrel,
Draw sword upon her secret enemies.

[GARCIA *bows, and passes through* Courtiers.

SIFFREDI and IRENE *come down stage.*

Siffredi. Irene !

Irene. My lord !

Siffredi. The Lord High Constable
Holdeth my promise to present him to you.
Receive him, child, for me, as one who stands
High in your father's heart.

Irene. My lord, he stands
That high in mine already !

Siffredi. So much duty
Commendeth you.

Irene. Is not the Lady Eleanor
Present to-day, my lord ?

Siffredi. By my direction,
Being o'ercome with grief, who in his majesty
Hath lost a father loved most tenderly,
She stays awhile without our city walls
In the convent of Our Lady.

Irene. I am drawn to her.
They say she hath a most sweet disposition,
And a rare beauty, too.

Siffredi. She hardly yet
Touches on womanhood. For the rest, her
presence
Might much impede our business.

[*SIFFREDI and IRENE pass up stage. MON-
CADA and DIEGO come down.*

Diego. Hast found thy paragon ?

Moncada.

Be patient !

Diego.

Teach me !

Already have I writ her down a myth
Born of thy airy fancy !

Moncada.

Scoffer, be silent !

Hither she comes.

[*SIFFREDI and IRENE approach.*

Diego. Irene !

Moncada. Confess, and quickly shriven be,
That she the flower is of purity.

Diego. This blossom's but a bud !

Moncada.

Find me another

Gives such rare promise.

Diego.

Stay thy tongue awhile.

[*As SIFFREDI and IRENE advance to MON-
CADA, DIEGO disappears.*

Siffredi. Thrice welcome, Count, I owe a
promise to you !

Permit me to present to you my daughter.

Irene, tho' fame heralds him, himself

Shall press his own advancement; this is my friend,
Ludovico Moncada, Lord High Constable
Of Sicily.

Moncada. We have met before, sweet lady.

Irene. Indeed, my lord

Moncada. Last winter in Palermo.

Irene. I have a memory of it; sir, believe me,
My mind was far set from discourtesy.

Moncada. The fault was mine, I'll make an
opportunity
That we shall grow to know each other better.

Irene. I am honoured, my lord.

[GRATIANO and PROSPERO bow to IRENE
and pass up stage with her.

Siffredi. Is she not fair, Moncada?

Moncada. She excels
The blossom of the may!

Siffredi. When thou hast come
To further knowledge of her thou'lt discover
Her mind mates with her body.

Moncada. Siffredi,
Through fire and water will I pass to win her!

Siffredi. I am thy friend, for certain proof
of it

The while I wait upon his majesty,
Into thy hands, as earnest of my love,
I entrust my treasure.

[SIFFREDI leads MONCADA up to IRENE,
and retires through folding-doors at
back. DIEGO and GARCIA come down
stage.

Diego. What, in the devil's name, hath brought thee hither ?

Garcia. The devil's cause. I warn you, Siffredi

Harbours suspicion of us.

Diego. Thou art too bold !

Garcia. How so ? Our levies, lying at Ajaccio,

Grow perilously insubordinate,

And what their tempers will betray them to

Another day I will not answer for.

Diego. What chafeth them ?

Garcia. They openly make question Of the honesty of your purpose.

Diego. Pooh !

Garcia. By my honour !

Diego. I could not quit before ! When the night falleth

On this most solemn farce I'll ride with you Into Ajaccio.

Garcia. Well, thrice well !

Diego. Meanwhile,

Seem not to see me, keep yourself apart,

For this suspicion we would put to sleep

Will make night hideous with alarm if Siffredi

Fall on us two together.

[GARCIA *passes up stage.*

Tho' mortal eye the earth may not pierce
through

And trace the mine that Siffredi springs on us

My ear detecteth with unerring certainty

How nearly he doth draw unto his end.

This heritage of Sicily, that hangs

Upon a convent miss and whom she marry,

Hath no more price than at what man may
value

A rush-light ! Where then doth this bring
us to ?

That no abatement groweth in the loves

Of Raymond and Irene is most certain,

And yet this soldier, stuffed so full of questions

And quaint conundrums, somewhere is set
down

To play a leading part.

[IRENE and MONCADA *come down stage.*

I will observe them.

A careless word mayhap I shall discover

Showing me whence the wind blows.

[DIEGO *retires up stage.*

Moncada. Thou art my prisoner !

Irene. I, my lord !

Moncada. Thy father

Surrenders thee as hostage for his love
Into my hands.

Irene. He giveth in some part
What is not his to give.

Moncada. Would I might make
Thy prison seem so sweet thou wouldst forget
To sigh for freedom !

Irene. Walls of stone, my lord,
Ofttimes a kindlier prison make than bowers
Hung round with roses ! There two prisons be,
The one but holds the body prisoner,
The other shutteth in the human soul.
It is most natural the body of us
Be pent up in a little space, the soul
Is like the lark, may it not spread its wings
Thro' the pure air, even to the gates of Heaven,
It may not live ! Tell me, I pray, my lord,
Where doth my father tarry ?

Moncada. With his majesty !

Irene. With Raymond !

[DIEGO comes between MONCADA and
IRENE.

Diego. Doth the Count bear hard on you ?

Beware him, cousin, tho' he seem plausible,
I know the current of his thoughts to run
Dangerously deep.

Irene. Your censure of him, sir,
Makes him advance strides in my estimation.

Moncada. Ha, Diego !

Diego. Count, beware ! I am watching you.
The sparrow-hawk may make a gallant flight,
Yet match not with the eagle.

Moncada. What fear I !
Who may reach higher than may I ?

*The folding-doors at back are thrown open and
an Usher enters.*

Usher. The king !

All. The king !

Moncada. The king !

*RAYMOND enters, attended by SIFFREDI and
Nobles. He pauses at the foot of the throne.*

Siffredi. May it please your majesty—

[*RAYMOND turns round to look for IRENE.*

SIFFREDI intercepts him.

Raymond. Where is she, Siffredi ?

Siffredi. Be prudent, sire !
See you not every eye is turned on you ?

[RAYMOND *ascends the throne, and to slow music the Courtiers advance in turn and kiss his hand.*

Raymond. Be still, O heart, she comes, my lady comes. [IRENE *advances.*
Irene, beautiful as hues that glow
Within the rainbow when the sun and shower
Are met together.

[*She kneels and kisses his hand.*
Thy part is mine, sweet maid !

[*He bends over her.*
Siffredi. Irene !

Irene. My lord !
[IRENE *rises and passes up the stage with MONCADA ; SIFFREDI comes to the steps of the throne.*

Raymond. My lords, whose loyal welcome
stirs in us
A swelling sea of words, we come among you
Green in our years, yet in our minds made strong
To deserve the utmost measure of your loves.
The gates that make a nation's glory open
About our city walls, whither they point us,

Be it to peace or war, where you dare follow
We shall not fear to lead ! There comes a
time

To monarch as to man, when age usurps
This human sovereignty, and, like dead leaves
Flying along the pathway of the wind,
Before advancing winter, attributes
Proper to a king fall from him one by one,
Till withered branches, and a sapless trunk
Proclaim him desolate. Death hath no terrors
For those who know it worthier to command
A little life with honour ! [RAYMOND *draws his*
sword.] For us, my lords,

There is no death but dishonour ! Let the word
Be kindled to a flame our kingdom through,
And while he lives your king shall foremost
stand

And fan the sacred fire night and day.

Siffredi. Peace for my word ! People of Sicily,
Sheltering within the convent of Our Lady,
A maid, the tender fruit that was begotten
Of his late majesty, her dwelling hath :
That which a father, bountiful, designed
For her weal, and this country's happiness,
Groweth to be fulfilled ! I here proclaim

That Raymond, lawful liege of Sicily,
As hand and seal upon this covenant

[SIFFREDI *unfolds and displays the signed
parchment given him by RAYMOND.*

Unto the eyes of all men testify,
For the half title of his heritance
Hath plighted her his troth !

All. Long live the king !

[IRENE *falls into MONCADA'S arms.*

Raymond. Thou hast outraged the very name
of honour ;

Thou hast betrayed me, I have done with thee.
Let me pass hence !

[RAYMOND *attempts to descend the throne
and reach IRENE.* SIFFREDI *bars his
way.*

Siffredi. Hast thou forgotten, sire,
The promise Heaven hath witnessed of thee ?

Raymond. Siffredi !

[RAYMOND *falls back stupefied.* *The storm
which has been heard all through at
intervals suddenly ceases.*

Siffredi. The storm is spent, the mists have
rolled away,
A new sun shines on Sicily to-day.

Merciful God, this kingdom keep from strife
And bless those thou hast joined as man and
wife !

*[A ray of sunshine struggles through the
window and falls on SIFFREDI.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *A Garden at Belmonte.* IRENE'S
window overlooking the Garden, MONCADA
is discovered beneath it.

Moncada. The king my rival is, it hath been
noted

Most cunningly by Diego, who upholdeth,
That turn which way I will therein doth lie
My great impediment ! I watched her nearly
When Siffredi his proclamation made
Touching the king's betrothal. Her cheek grew
pale

With the pallor of death, and had my arm not
held her

The storm had stricken her, as reeds are stricken,
Straight to the earth. Sweet icicle, fair frost,
The fires I kindled in me to undo thee
Turn on myself, compassing my destruction,
And but the dews of pity in thine eyes
May lay my burning fever !

DIEGO enters silently, coming down the garden.

Is it thou, Diego?—

Why hast thou followed me?

Diego.

Friend follows friend!

In that my office I have observed, Moncada,
The temper of your mind disordered is,
And like a charitable physician come
To diagnose you.

Moncada.

Leave me!

Diego.

Let me read you.

A most abstracted, melancholy air,
A sleeplessness o' nights, a tendency
To stand in the light o' the moon, and count the
stars,

Peopling each star with one divinity;
An itching fever, a disordered appetite,
An instant sickening on the sight of man,
Even as a stomach that is overcharged
Rejecteth food. I warn you, Lord Moncada,
You have fed too copiously upon one dish,
And only by a steady abstinence,
An avoidance of this poison irritant,
Shall this your system shake these humours off,
And assume a healthy aspect.

Moncada. Can you help me to it ?

Diego. Here is Irene's chamber !

Moncada. I am desperate, Diego,
Day upon day doth drag itself along,
And yet I nothing can advance with her ;
And when I urge my suit with Siffredi
He swears she holds me in a high esteem,
But, maiden-like, hideth in her deep heart
The rose of her affection.

Diego. Much I marvel
That such a chit, a child of so few summers,
So slight a woman, hath o'ermastered thee,
That there be great ones born amid her sex
Who, with a flash from their eyes, will strike
men dumb,
I have somewhere read of ; but this garden
flower
Surely is none of them !

Moncada. I am not schooled
In aught the gentle arts that make love born ;
If I press on her too much I weary her ;
If I abstain she further grows from me.

Diego. I would thou wert the man that once I
knew thee,
No lightning flash more swift and terrible !

Moncada. Diego, this is no enterprise of war,
Where oft, disdaining wait a tedious siege,
I have carried the enemies' ramparts by assault,
And so possessed the heart of all the city.

Diego. Thus were her heart won,—hadst thou
heart enough.

Moncada. Dost thou think so ?

Diego. Is not Siffredi thy friend ?

Moncada. I hold him so.

Diego. Hie you to him forthwith,
Acquaint him with the obstacle that combats
This your endeavour ; roundly declare that the
king

Presseth so hotly his pursuit, your venture
Appears too hazardous. Go further, my lord,
Tell him be she not made your wife to-night
You will have none of her.

Moncada. To-night !

Diego. I'll find you

A worthy priest, a very proper fellow,
Who hath, ere now, for a consideration,
Lent himself and his office to a cause
Much similar to thine.

Moncada. Thou wouldst not wed her
In violence to her consent ?

Diego. Why not ?
Marry her first, consent will follow after ;
Be she a dutiful wife she'll yield it thee,
Be she not, thou shalt put her in the wrong,
And get thyself much credit.

Moncada. Faith, I will not !
This midnight march on so defenceless a foe
Cries out upon my manhood.

Diego. As you will.
[RAYMOND is seen advancing in the distance.
Hither, I wager, comes a gallant to her
You shall not find so squeamish.

Moncada. It is the king !
Diego. He is fashioned in the likeness of a
god !

No wonder she hath eyes alone for him.

Moncada. Diego, I will unmake this god !
[*He draws his sword.*

Diego. Art mad ?
Bethink thee this may be thy wedding night,
And what a figure shalt thou make before her,
Smirched, as thou wilt be, with her lover's blood.

Moncada. Ah, misery !

Diego. Mark how yon cloud doth gallop o'er
the heavens,

And screens from us the image of the moon !
Draw close with me in this abetting shadow
Whence we will look out on his purposes.
And here, beneath the cover of the darkness,
I'll give thee better counsel.

[*As MONCADA and DIEGO draw back into
the shadow, RAYMOND advances to
IRENE'S window.*

Raymond. Heaven hath done well to hide this
moon away,
That is the emblem of inconstancy ;
But for these myriad sparks of fire, these stars
That are love's own particular ambassadors,
Into what region is their banishment,
That they, with all the world, abandon me ?
I had entreated them to stoop and peep
Behind yon casement, where, with weeping eyes,
Irene watches, and beseech of her
To look down on her lover ! Eyes, that ache
for me,
Weep ye no more, and if your mistress chide
you,
Say that I come to plead my cause with her.
Tell her each throb of life that stirs within
her,

Each pulse of love, beneath my soul's embrace
Shall find a thousand tongues to be my witness
My honour is unshaken. Come then, night,
Out with these lamps, and bury this the earth
In merest darkness, I am not dismayed,
For here within me burns so bright a flame
Heaven's matchless fires are cold and dim
beside it ;

Here is not darkness, but a flood of light,
Here is not night, but the full glare of day.
For in yon casement her pale taper shines,
And in yon shrine my saint her dwelling hath !

[IRENE *appears at her window, and opens
the casement.*

Irene. O God, thy hand hath blotted out the
sun,
And this earth's garden, whose exulting trees
Shook out their young green to the summer
heaven,
Is overhung with shadows ! Night, deep night,
My lover's absence muffles up thy moon,
My lover's treason tarnishes thy stars ;
Were he not forsworn thou wouldst smile out
on me
From twenty million stars, and there would be

A moon of joy, spread out from east to west,
Lighting the whole wide world !

Raymond. Earth's roof hath opened,
And here upon the brow of night is hung
A glimpse of Paradise !

[RAYMOND *conceals himself in the shadow.*

Irene. What whisper stirreth ?
Was it a nightingale that did beguile
The listening leaves ?

Raymond. Oh, mark the day draw near !
Night shuddering flies when those fair eyes
appear :

Ne'er on enraptured sight such vision rose.
Lest unsubstantial this my dreaming shows,
Here will I kneel, with hands outstretched to
thee,

Praying thee fade not from the world and me !

[RAYMOND *kneels.*

Irene. Raymond !

Raymond. If my name trembles on those lips
Speed it not forth into the midnight air,
It is content upon so warm a nest
To lie and dream the silent hours away !

Irene. Hope hath no solace for unending pain,
Now cruel despair seize on your prey again ;

Poor eyes that may not know the calm of sleep
Hence to your pillow, there to watch and weep!

[IRENE *closes her casement.* RAYMOND
springs forward.

Raymond. Irene! O God! She is gone!—

My pathway lies
Up to yon lattice hid beneath the skies,
To heaven I ascend, leaving dull earth behind,
These heights being won, my true love I shall
find.

[RAYMOND *commences to scale the vine that
grows up to IRENE'S window.* MON-
CADA *half advances out of the shadow.*
SIFFREDI *enters, and DIEGO draws*
MONCADA *back.* SIFFREDI *places his*
hand on RAYMOND'S shoulder.

Siffredi. What thief is here?

Raymond.

Siffredi!

Siffredi.

Your majesty

Doth me much honour.

Raymond. Hast thou not done with honour
That hast dishonoured both thyself and me?
Had any other man misused me so,
I had nailed the very heart of him on high,
That this new king might strike an instant terror

Into the minds of traitors !

Siffredi. I am no traitor.

This breast of mine has bared itself too oft
Against thine enemies to learn fear of thee!

Raymond. Insolent trust, that fed my soul with
favours,

Corrupting, thro' my soul, the desperate arm
That cries out to avenge me !

Siffredi. Thou art unjust !

Raymond. Unjust ! Where then is justice ?

Would I were dead

Ere I had ever known a kindness from thee !

Siffredi. I claim the king's voice, not the man's.
I claim

The impartial judgment of your holy office,
As man to man disdain my answer is,
Unto the king I deliver my defence !
The welfare of this realm of Sicily
His majesty bequeathed as legacy
To my sole care. At that dark hour, when
feeling

Death's finger on his brow he summoned me
Into his presence, he foreshadowed to me
The hostile factions that would spring to life
O'er his dead body ; to prepare against

Those murderous ills he urged on me to
compass

The marriage he designed for Sicily.

And there, upon the threshold of eternity,

I swore to him my promise ! Thou knowest
well

What followed after. Homeward having sped,

High in my duty, from the untroubled blue

Of heaven a thunderbolt fell, demanding of me

Either my bond of honour to the dead

Or the dear sum of my child's happiness.

Then was it, being all dismayed, your promise

Unsought of me, your exhortation to me

Of my own will to make the noblest use of it,

Stirred in my mind. Surely was this the
light !—

The occasion most worthy, the sacrifice most
ample,

Not yours alone but mine ! A common glory

Enveloped us, even as I my last,

You your first offering to our country made ;

I took naught from you was not mine already,

For my advancement nothing, for you all !—

Here is the offence that brands me as a traitor ;

Here is the weapon with which I struck at honour ;

Here is my plea, plain-stated, unanswerable.
I claim of the king my right: I claim his
judgment!

Raymond. The man is master in me, not the
king!

The man in whom are hunger, thirst, love, hate,
Delight, despair, and all the elements
That make him human.

Siffredi. Be thou human still!
Do these, thy human walls, shut in no soul?
Art thou no more than man the animal?

Raymond. Some men have never known they
had a soul
Until the moment that they faced with Death.
Rather with these will I cast in my lot
Than sell my body!

Siffredi. Doth no obligation,
No duty dwell in thee?

Raymond. Did I claim this duty?

Siffredi. Are there not duties made not of
ourselves;
Are there not obligations others' hands
Have put upon us, whether we will or no,
To endure like men?

Raymond. I'll not be bound by them!

Siffredi. So the world cries, so each ignoble
soul

Who is not monarch in his own domain,
And for the state within him hath not framed
Provident laws.

Raymond. The riot here within me
Defies all laws or human or divine !

Siffredi. Thou dost well to confess it ; thou art
like
An ill-constructed instrument adversity
Hath put all out of tune.

Raymond. The fault is not mine :
Blame thou thy world that hath so played
upon me !—

What wouldst thou make of me !—

Siffredi. I'd have thee own
An equal mind for every turn of fortune,
A disposition proof against each ill
That mortal flesh inherits !

Raymond. Where be ills
More masterful than mine ?

Siffredi. There be some ills
Thou hast not tasted of ! Such be Death's stings,
The foul breath of dishonour, fell disease,
The scorpion whips of poverty when friends,

Seeing you fallen, wipe you from their memories
Like characters that in an idle moment
They have traced upon a tablet.

Raymond. Is it for these
Despicable images of the thing called man
You demand of me my sacrifice?

Siffredi. Even so.
If man be small you smaller grow that build
on it

Your own disparagement !

Raymond. Oh hideous world !
There is no thing of beauty born in thee
Except it be my love !

Siffredi. There is beauty in all
That stirs on the face of the earth ! The murky
river

That runs through the mud of a city turns to
silver

When the sun kisses it.

Raymond. Divine Irene,
If death prevail with thee the sun fails too,
And my life's lamp shall swift extinguished be !

Siffredi. There are men still live whose lives
are like the light

That flashes from the topmost lighthouse tower,

And come the sea of sorrow up in arms
It cannot shake the rock, their soul's foundation !
With calm eyes looking out into the night,
Watching the world's wild tempest whistling by,
They light the lamp that hails the mariner
Who, struggling on with his disabled barque
Through mist and tempest, findeth a new-born
hope,

And steers his fragile vessel home again
Into a place of safety. Lonely the heights
That make their dwelling, yet their solitude
Is mightier than the state that hems about
The palaces of kings and emperors ;
And when the crack of doom falls out of Heaven,
When the last tempest overtopples them,
The world weeps tears of immortal sorrow
For the light that shines no more !

Raymond. Let others tempt
Those heights eternal, I have no wings to rise
Whom sorrow bears to earth !

[RAYMOND *turns to go.*

Siffredi. Whither art thou going ?

Raymond. Back to Palermo.

Siffredi. Adieu !

Raymond. Not yet adieu ;

Did I not think there yet is time to stay
This headstrong tide of fortune, never again
Would I set foot in Sicily !

Siffredi.

Farewell !

Deep in my heart I have only tears for thee.
Farewell !

Raymond. Farewell ! [*Exit* RAYMOND *slowly.*

Siffredi. Alas for thee, poor Raymond !

Life is a song that hath its source in sorrow,
A ceaseless sob from those harp-strings whose
harmonies

Tremble with tears. Nature so fashions us
That he who hath not suffered finds no pur-
pose

In the vast sea of our humanity ;
Is like an empty hollow-sounding shell
Cast by the ocean on a desert strand
And for all time abandoned. [*Exit* SIFFREDI.

DIEGO and MONCADA *come down stage.*

Diego. He is thine, Moncada ! hasten thou
after him ;

This pathway here will intercept his passage
Ere he re-enter Belmonte !

Moncada. Where is the king ?

Diego. Already on his road back to Palermo,
Like one possessed !—Come, I will hence, and
fetch

Our holy baggage !

Moncada. I would sell my soul
To have this night's work over !

[*MONCADA turns to go.*

Diego. This sovereign sea
Hath so impetuous a flood it threatens
To overwhelm us !—Bear it in mind, my lord,
You let my name not show in aught of this !

Moncada. I follow thee ! [*Exit MONCADA.*

Diego. Spirits of darkness attend thee !
Thine is a deed to-night, didst thou but know it,
Whose ugliness the cloak of hell itself
Were not black enough to hide ! Swiftly and
surely

My pitiless purpose shapes unto its end,
And almost ere to-morrow's moon has risen
I will ring my curtain down !

[*A glimpse of the moonlight falls on DIEGO
looking up to IRENE'S window as the
scene closes.*

SCENE 2. IRENE'S *Chamber*. IRENE *discovered with her maid* NERISSA. *A light burning.*

Nerissa. Wilt not to bed, sweet lady?

Irene. Nay, Nerissa,
Since sleep and I are strangers!

Nerissa. Do not weep;
Keep a brave heart, all will come well, dear lady!

Irene. Alas, some hearts were never, never fashioned
To hold a course over tempestuous seas!

Nerissa. For those who keep a brave heart,
lady dear,
Hope will most surely not abandon them!

Irene. Talk not of Hope! Hope feeds upon
despair,
That is despair's mere drug and antidote,
I have seen Hope born all my days; Nerissa,
And wept each nightfall at its burial!
I have lived too long on Hope!

Nerissa. Had I a lover
Had used me so unkindly, I would be wiser

Than weep as thou dost !

Irene. How so ?

Nerissa. Get me another !

Irene. That cannot I !

Nerissa. Indeed, my lady dear,
Thou canst not find me a handsome man in the
world

I will match not with a better !

Irene. How dost thou know,
That knowest not what love is !

Nerissa. Good, my lady,
I have loved scores and scores of gentlemen—
And seriously !

Irene. Happy child, whose scores
Have left no scars behind !

Nerissa. The pity is
We women still must after handsome men,
That are so eaten up with vanities
And small conceits, born of our flatteries,
There is no enduring them ! The saucy fellows
Make of themselves a feast for our eyes, and
fancy

We shall be won outright ! Love is a race
Where many a tortoise hath outpaced these
hares,

Nor was there ever a man ill-favoured yet,
That need despair to win.

Irene. How you prattle, child !
Bring me my scarf, the silken one he gave me.

[NERISSA *brings her a scarf.*

Nay, I'll not wear it ! let it lie here, on my
knee !—

I am cold, Nerissa !

Nerissa. Thou hast a burning fever ;
Get thee to bed, sweet mistress !

Irene. Not yet, Nerissa.
Loosen these tresses—here about my shoulders—
Even as he loved them.

Nerissa. Out upon the man !
He is not worthy such a lamb.

Irene. What say you ?
If a wish could wither up that tongue of thine
It were withered now !

Nerissa. I meant no harm, my lady.

Irene. I do believe thee, girl !—Hast thou a
mother ?—

I dearly wish that I had !—

Nerissa. Lady dear,
Dear mistress ! I would give the world of
me,

To mend what here lies broken !

[NERISSA *kneels at IRENE'S feet, who throws
her arms around her.*

Irene. Child, some images,
Once broken, never may be mended more !

SIFFREDI *enters suddenly, and motions to NERISSA
to retire,*

Siffredi. In tears, Irene ?

Irene. Yea, my lord, my solace,
These last few friends, not yet abandon me
Nor will not till I die !

Siffredi. Come, dry thine eyes,
I bring thee news shall put roses in thy cheeks !
Thou art to be married !

Irene. Married ! Oh, my lord !
[*She kisses SIFFREDI'S hand.*

Siffredi. Unto a noble gentleman, and a gene-
rous,
That same Moncada I commended to thee,
Late in Palermo. [IRENE *rises.*

Irene. Sire, if I may claim
To be thy dutiful daughter, make not a
mockery
Of these my sufferings !

Siffredi. Thou art to be married !

Irene. What unkind proof is this you would
put on me,

That know full well am I denied to marry
Him whom my heart has chosen, all my days
Will I remain a maid !

Siffredi. Thou art deceived,
Thou canst not !

Irene. Wherefore, my lord ?

Siffredi. Insolent gossips
About the court at Palermo openly whisper
Thou art the acknowledged mistress of the
king,

Who, being about to marry with his cousin,
Tireth of thee and puts thee about thy business,
Wherefore thy lily cheeks !

Irene. Hadst thou a sword,
And hacked not out their tongues ?

Siffredi. There be some poisons
Are best not meddled with !

Irene. Father !

Siffredi. Our house
Shall stand above the shadow of suspicion !
Sooner may there be blots on the face of the
sun

Than blemishes on the good name of our daughters !

Irene. Here dwells a maiden in a deep distress,

Raymond, true knight, wilt thou abandon her ?
Come forth, and champion this most sacred cause !

Give back to the world this lie !

Siffredi. Thou knowest, Irene,
He is dead to thee for ever !

Irene. Ravisher
Of his good name, he is mine and mine and mine

Until the same lips that proclaimed his faith
Consume it up again !

Siffredi. Take thou this parchment
Into thine own hands, search it o'er with thine eyes,

Testify, if thou canst, this hand, this seal,
Are other than thy lover's.

[*He hands her a parchment.*

Irene. Would that these eyes
Were sealed with the everlasting seal of night
Ere they were tempted unto the betrayal
Of this poor heart of mine !

Siffredi. Hast thou no pride ?

Irene. What's pride to me ! O pride, here will
I end

My miserable days, and satisfy
My outraged soul that it was given up
Unto so great a traitor !

Siffredi. Wilt thou leave
Thy draggled name behind thee ? 'twill remain
Like to an autumn rose the rains have wept on
Till it falls bruised and broken from the spray
Into the mould below !

Irene. Poor rose !

Siffredi. This marriage,
Being most honourable, will give the lie,
In the throat of life, to rumour !

Irene. What saith my lord
Unto the bargain ?

Siffredi. Being much in love
He hath spoke volumes.

Irene. Write them not down for me.—
When wouldst thou marry me, my lord ?

Siffredi. To-night !

Irene. To-night ! Just Heaven ! Ravening
wolves have pity
Beside these human things !

Siffredi. Prepare, Irene,
Thou hast but a moment !

Irene. So I have heard tell
The executioner to his hapless victim
Speaks ere he biddeth her her head lay
down

Upon the block !—This is not welcome cheer
For a maid that is to be married !

Siffredi. Art thou ready ?

Irene. Oh, never ! Never ! Never !—
I think I must be dreaming ! Are you or I
Become suddenly mad ? Thou wilt not do this
thing !—

Thou shalt not !—Father !—I have shed tears
enough [*She kneels to him.*
To wash sin from the world, yet still I'll
weep

Until the very stones cry out to thee,
Imploring pity !

Siffredi. I cannot hear thee !

Irene. Thou shalt !

[*IRENE rises.*

I will have none of this marriage ! Neither now
nor never !

I will have none of this cursed thing !

Siffredi. Come, calm thee!—
Behold, thy bridegroom waiteth for thee!

[SIFFREDI *draws aside a curtain in a doorway.* MONCADA *and a Priest are discovered standing motionless.* IRENE *falls across the table burying her head in her hands.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. *A Hall in Belmonte. Night.*DIEGO *discovered alone.*

Diego. There are some men hunt the wild
boar, some that track

The leopard to his lair, the sun-tanned lion,
King of all beasts, who, lashing with his tail
In a fine frenzy, turns on his pursuers
And rends them. I have marked down for my
prey

The most magnificent creature in the universe,
Man himself, he whose very blemishes
Have made of him a god! When I behold
him

Erect, upright, in my mind I picture him
As Nature framed him first, upon all fours,
Till conscious of a rare superiority
O'er the brute world, he raised his arms to
Heaven

And grew to what he is! How delicately

He is formed throughout ; and then what complex parts,
 Each delicate, he bears along with him
 Through most unheard-of perils ! Nature hath
 blessed him
 Less than of all the animal world with weapons
 Shaped to attack or to defend himself ;
 He hath no claws, no teeth, his skin is soft,
 He is not agile as the panther is,
 He almost wanteth balance ! Yet his mind
 Is such an infinite treasure of resource,
 He hath a spirit so indomitable,
 Each obstacle he greatly overstrides
 And assumes to himself the sovereignty of the
 earth !

SIFFREDI *enters behind DIEGO with papers in his hand.*

Siffredi. Diego !

Diego. Who calls ?

Siffredi. Thy master, Siffredi !

Diego. Siffredi ! [*Aside, coming down stage.*

Siffredi. I have papers here whose matter
 Touches you nearly.

Diego. What may they deal of?

Siffredi. Treason!

Diego. Treason!—A subject most unpalatable,
An unmistakable, damnable offence.

Where doth this rank herb grow?

Siffredi. Here in our midst.

It sitteth at our table, sleeps with us,
Makes its home on our hearth, and seemingly
Thought itself not suspect.

Diego. Such confidence
May have been born of innocence!

Siffredi. May have been,
Had I not proof it was not!

Diego. Doth the offender
Stand high at court?

Siffredi. As high as thou dost.—Traitor!

Diego. Traitor! what tangible witness have
you, sir,

Of so insolent a calumny?

Siffredi. The dying confessions
Of thy confederates Lorenzo and Castagno,
Who being fallen upon in Ajaccio,
And put upon a sudden trial, have stated
Yourself to be prime mover and abettor
In their desperate attempt.

Diego. They lied !

Siffredi. They did not !

Ask thy confederate, Garcia, who stricken
With guilty fear, hath straightway taken him
In flight from Sicily.

Diego. My confederate !

Siffredi. Think you I have not witnessed the
daily service
Passing 'twixt you and him ?

Diego. What is my sentence ?
To be strung up as a felon ?

[*DIEGO draws his sword.*

Siffredi. Put up thy sword,
Lest in just anger I should beat thy brains out,
With the hilt of mine.

Diego. Was it thus you slew my father ?

Siffredi. Thy father, tho' a traitor, was a
soldier,
And met a soldier's death ! No soul yet knows
Of this your infamy ! Within twelve hours
Betake thee from the coast of Sicily
Into perpetual banishment. Henceforth
If ever thou set foot within our realm
While breath inhabits thee, upon that instant,
By the unshakable honour of Siffredi,

Thy life is forfeit !—

[SIFREDI *passes in front of* DIEGO,
and exits.

Diego. Twelve hours ! As many seconds have
sufficed

For many a tragedy. Already Raymond,
Urged by a note most cunningly contrived
As coming from his lady, storms the citadel
Possessed by that consenting foe, Irene :
And for Moncada who, I am informed,
Rode forth at daybreak, used, I doubt, by
Siffredi

For this rebellion, let him but return
To my hand in time, and these thumb'd cards of
mine
Shall be flung down on the table.

MONCADA *enters, his military attire in much
disorder. He flings himself on a couch.*

Excellent fortune !
Good morrow my gallant ! Good morrow my
nimble bridegroom,
You were early astir this morning !

[DIEGO *crosses over to* MONCADA.
What garments are these ?

They savour more of the camp than the marriage chamber !

Whence have you ridden ? (*Aside.*) He hath come from Ajaccio.

Whither come you, my lord ?

Moncada. Peace, I command thee,
I am out of humour for thee !

Diego. Wherefore ?

Moncada. Thy marriage
Was damnably conceived.

Diego. Were your advances
Met slightingly ?

Moncada. They were not proffered, sir,
Soon as the abominable priest his work had done
I muffled up my face and fled from her chamber
Like one plague-stricken.

Diego. Therein you were wrong,
It was your duty lay immediate siege
To her affections.

Moncada. She abhorreth me,
And something of my manhood stirred in me
To pity her and leave her.

Diego. A gross error !
She is your wife, her honour is your honour,
He who steals one steals the other !

Moncada. Stealing, say you ?

Diego. You must be in ignorance the king
hath ridden

Secretly from Palermo, and was seen

Half-an-hour since—mine own eyes witnessed
it—

Beneath her window.

Moncada. Diego !

Diego. Be not too confident !

Walls have been scaled ere now, and willing
wives

From absent husbands spirited away.

Moncada. On thine eternal soul, come answer
me.

Is the king her lover ?

Diego. Would you have me swear to it ?

I have seen him hold so close to her, her bones
Have cracked in his embrace !

Moncada. Oh, devil ! Get hence !

[*He strikes* DIEGO.]

I would be alone !—Nay, I'll unto her chamber
And put this doubt to sleep. [*Exit* MONCADA.]

Diego. Now, Siffredi,

We are advancing by great leaps and bounds
Into the heart of our story !

GARCIA *enters in great haste and confronts*
DIEGO.

Diego. Garcia !

Garcia. Betrayed !

Diego. Wouldst put thy head in the lion's
mouth, man ? withdraw !

Our party is scattered, Siffredi pursues thee
To have thy life !

Garcia. I know it, I have thee !
I had a mortal terror thou wouldst escape me. .

Diego. Madman, hear reason !

Garcia. I have no time for reason !
Reason with this if thou wilt.

[*He stabs DIEGO, who falls.*

Diego. Oh, villain ! villain !
Thou hast stolen the light from mine eyes while
this my vengeance

Was still unsatisfied !—

Come, Death—quickly possess thy tenement !
These few bare inches of this senseless steel
Have triumphed o'er the finer part of me,
And with my body overcome my spirit.

[*He dies. Voices are heard without, crying in
pursuit of GARCIA, "Traitor! Traitor!"*

Garcia. Lie still, vile body, that art but the
shell,

The spirit I have loosened into hell!

[*GARCIA draws a cloak over the body and
disappears as the stage darkens, and the
cries of "Traitor!" approach nearer.*

SCENE 2. IRENE'S *Chamber.* IRENE *discovered
alone.*

Irene. Is it here you would lay me down?
Gently, good fellows! This mystical old yew
Shelters me from the rainfall. Here are wild
flowers,
And grasses, and soft beds of mosses. Well,
well, well, well!
Bury me not in the shadow! hide me not from
the sun,
The peep o' the stars at night, the light o' the
moon,
Silvering the churchyard stones!—
Haste thee, kind fellows! Death is a dreamless
slumber
That no discordant echo from the world

Comes to unmake or mar. With each new
spring

Above my head the daisies will awake,
And storm or sun shall not disquiet me
That shall be deaf to all!

[RAYMOND *appears at the casement, throws it open, and enters.*

Raymond. Irene, Irene!

Irene. Set me a cross at my head! Mark
where I lie!

Have done, have done !

[RAYMOND *approaches her, and almost shakes her, thinking her asleep and dreaming.*

Raymond. Irene!

Irene. Was anything stirring?

The wind is up to-night!

Raymond. What lightning stroke
Hath laid this shrine in ruins? Love, my
 love,

We are the sport of fiends ! Irene !

Irene. Listen !

They are calling Irene. Once there was a
maiden

Went by such a name, years and years ago !
So long, I can scarce remember.—Memory !—

She was gentle they say, and she died !—I weep
for her,

Tears such as madmen and madwomen weep :
That weep till they laugh, and laugh till they
weep again !

Hast thou not heard them, on such a night as
this,

When the storm is rising ? Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah !

[*She clutches hold of RAYMOND'S arm.*

Raymond. Oh, by this most majestic firmament,
By all the eternal laws that order it,
What things are these that play with human
hearts

As they were atoms signifying nothing !

“ I love, I am loved ! ” Nature cries it aloud.

It is the universal mechanism

That drives the world round. Here is most gross
deceit,

Nature neglects her laws, eternity

Forsakes her office, and all things of substance

Are scattered into dreams !

[RAYMOND *sinks on his knees, and buries his
head in his hands.* IRENE *approaches
him, and pulls him by the sleeve of his
doublet.*

Irene. If thou art kind,
And fall across her lover, take him by the hand
And lead him to the spot where she lies buried.—

When I am dead and sleeping,
In the churchyard, calm and still,
Come softly to me, creeping,
Beside the little hill!
Whisper to me that you love me,
That a maid never breathed above me,
I shall wake and hear you weeping!—
[IRENE *breaks off her singing.*

Oh, the burden of this song goeth ill!

Raymond. Oh, lay this weary head upon my
breast,
And close these tear-stained rose-leaves into
rest! [He draws her to him.

Irene. A warm breath blows on my cheek!
Oh, joy, the summer
Has come again!—Carry me up to the window,
And let the sun shine in on me.—Alas,
I am cold! I am cold!—

[RAYMOND *takes her in his arms.*

Raymond. Here is warmth, here is shelter;
Here is the summer of our love!

Irene.

Unhand me!

[*IRENE breaks from him.*

Who art thou?—Thou art my husband! I know thee. Save me!

An adder's touch is poison less than thine!

Raymond. Peace, peace!

Irene. Away! Father, he follows me!

Father! Heaven! Help! Oh, where is Raymond!—

Raymond!

Raymond. Dear eyes awake, awake and know me:

I am indeed that Raymond! I am thy lover!

[*He kneels at her feet, the door is thrown open, and MONCADA enters with drawn sword.*

Moncada. Oh, damnable confession!

[*RAYMOND starts up.*

Raymond.

Who art thou?

Moncada. Her husband!

Raymond. Liar!

Moncada. Before Heaven she is my wife!

Raymond. In the sight of Heaven she is mine!

Moncada. Thy soul to hell!

[*RAYMOND and MONCADA engage. MONCADA falls mortally wounded.*

Raymond. Oh, God ! what have I done.

[MONCADA *draws near to* IRENE.

Moncada. Come hither to me !

What life denies, death claims, sweet bride, of
thee ! [He *stabs her*.

Raymond. Oh, horrible, bloody night ! Oh,
martyred saint !

Is there no pity ?— [RAYMOND *stoops over her*.

SIFFREDI *enters in haste*.

Siffredi. Was it here I heard the clatter
Of swords ? All is in darkness ! What ho !
lights there !

Servants and others enter bearing torches.

Your majesty !—Moncada !—Dead !—Irene !
Art thou hurt, child ? answer me !

Raymond. She cannot, Sire ;—
She bleeds to death !

Siffredi. Raymond, whose work is this ?

Raymond. Mine and your own, and this great
villain's here !

Irene. Oh, who hath taught those holy lips to
lie,
That were my lover's!—Would you mock at
me?—

I pray more charity be found in Heaven
Than dwells upon this tear-stained earth
below!

Siffredi. Her mind is wandering!

Raymond. 'Tis but a star
Hath tumbled from the fiery firmament
Into eternal darkness!

Irene. Where is Raymond?
If it be wickedness to wish his kisses
Once more on these poor lips, Oh God most
merciful,
Give me back but one little glimpse of day
That e'er I die these eyes may look on him!
Oh, feeble hands,—to feel for him,—to touch
him

Ere we be severed from him, you and I,
That silent, long forever!

Raymond. Speak to me!—
Speak to me!—

Irene. Hark! a voice!—the faint, far voice,

That troubled me when sleeping!—Where am I?—

All is so dark!—and then—these strange, wild thoughts

That only come in dreams!—Oh, pity me,
I am in the blindness of approaching night,
And tho' it only be the shadow of thee,
Come to me, love!—

[She feels with her hands for him.

Raymond. Oh, love, my love, my love!

[He folds her in his arms.

Irene. Raymond!

[IRENE suddenly recognizes her lover and falls dead in his arms.

Raymond. Sleep on, Irene; since from the casket

My precious jewel is stolen, here I make
An end of all things!—

[He raises his dagger to stab himself;

SIFFREDI rapidly arrests him.

Siffredi. Hold thine impious hand!—

Take up thy cross of sorrow, journey forth
Among thy people, there thy life-work lies;
Even as work shall heal these piteous wounds,

So shall these tears thy manhood purify ;
Thou that hast suffered, go thy way and live,
A new world waits thee, find thy peace in it !

[SIFFREDI *points through the open window
where the lights of a sleeping city are
seen in the distance.* RAYMOND *falls
weeping over* IRENE'S *body.*

CURTAIN.

